

AUG 3 1964

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# Life of an Ambassador's Wife

## *Mrs. Bruce Is Hostess in London Mansion*

BY MAVIS COLE

**L**ONDON, AUG. 2.—Evangeline Bruce, America's first lady here, sat on a chintz-covered sofa in Heiress Barbara Hutton's former honeymoon home and talked about flowers.

"The rooms here are mostly too big for cut flowers," said Mrs. Bruce, whose husband is United States Ambassador David Bruce. "So I have re-organized the greenhouses during our three years here."

The Bruce's official residence is a 40-room mansion named Winfield House, which Barbara Hutton gave to the government in 1946. The 12-acre garden is the second biggest in London. The largest is Queen Elizabeth's 45 acres at Buckingham palace.

Miss Hutton built the pink, three-story, pseudo-Georgian house in 1937 after her marriage to a Danish count, Kurt Haugwitz Reventlow, second of her seven husbands. She left less than two years later, after the marriage broke up.

Today, the house in Regent's Park blossoms with brightly colored pelargonium and tall fuchsia plants grown in the embassy greenhouses under Mrs. Bruce's supervision. In winter, the rooms are filled with bulbs.

### *Has Marble Staircase*

"I'm mad about gardening," said Mrs. Bruce, a tall, friendly woman with a shock of dark brown hair. At her home in the Georgetown district of Washington, D. C., she likes pottering around in the garden. But she finds little time for her hobby in her life as an official hostess here.

The five principal downstairs rooms of Winfield House lead to a terrace and lush lawn with the greenery of Regent's Park beyond. Many contain fine antique French furniture given by Miss Hutton. The main staircase, made of marble and taken from a French chateau, is lined with black and gold framed prints of American Presidents.

Evee Bruce knows her diplomatic world well. Her father, the late Edward Bell of New York, was a career diplomat and she spent her childhood globe-trotting to Japan, Hungary, France, Sweden, Denmark, and Holland. Her English mother, the former Etelka Sutrees, is now married to a retired British diplomat, Sir James Dodds, and lives near London.

Through her father, Mrs. Bruce is descended from a family which lived in 17th century New York. On her mother's side she can count Robert Smith Surtees, author of the Victorian hunting romps called "Jorrock's," and the historian, Robert Surtees, among her ancestors.

Born in New York, she spent childhood vacations with her grandparents in northern England. "I traveled around so much and I never really lived in the United States until I went to Radcliffe college," she said. "When I had been there a year, war broke out and I decided to go to Washington to see what I could do to help."

### *Turned Down for Job*

In Washington, she met Bruce then a colonel in the Office of Strategic Services. He interviewed her for a job and turned her down because he thought her French and German would be more useful in the office.

In 1943, the then Evee Bell came to London. Col. Bruce arrived six months later and the couple met again. They married in Boston in 1945. Since the war, Bruce has been ambassador to France, West Germany, and Britain.

Mrs. Bruce and her husband share many interests including gardens, architecture, painting, antiques, china, museums, and history. "But, alas, we don't have much spare time for these things," she said.

The couple have three children—Alexandria, 17; David, 16; and Nicky, 12. The two eldest children go to boarding school in the United States. The youngest lives with his parents and rides the bus and subway to his London preparatory school. Next year, he continues his education in the United States.

Mrs. Bruce buys her clothes ready made from department stores in the United States and London. She also gets one or two things a year from Paris, usually evening dresses.

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### *Christmas in Virginia*

The Bruce family are always together at Christmas, which they usually spend at their country home in Virginia, an old tobacco plantation. "It is five hours drive from Washington and we have a real Dickensian family Christmas there," said Mrs. Bruce. "There is snow, a brilliant blue sky, no neighbors."

After their marriage, the Bruces spent almost five years in France where Bruce was chief of the Economic Cooperation administration [Marshall aid], and then, for two and a half years, American ambassador.

Winfield House is known for its good food and fine wine. The chef is a Russian who has added such American delicacies as Crab Maryland and cornstalks to his international menu. Bruce, a connoisseur, chooses the wines.

### *Coffee Plus a Speaker*

Mrs. Bruce likes small dinner parties. She tries to have not more than 160 people at official receptions. "I have such a variety of entertaining," she said. "There are coffee mornings for embassy wives, welcoming and good-bye cocktail parties, official dinners, and large receptions."

At the monthly coffee mornings, the wives usually have a guest to talk about some aspect of British life. "We sometimes have slides and answer periods," said Mrs. Bruce. Speakers have included Basil Spence, the architect of Coventry cathedral; Ballerina Margot Fonteyn; and Author Rebecca West. The wives also

have a committee which raises money for British charities.

Mrs. Bruce loves Britain. "I like the attitude of people here," she said. "There is a lack of conventionality which gives freedom and great pleasure."

But among the home-style things which she misses are, surprisingly, English muffins. "It sounds strange saying this but we cannot get American-style English muffins here," she said. "There are things called crumpets which look like muffins but don't taste the same."

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